Great talking with you, Mike. Stay in touch!
Steve

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MATWATCH

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STEVE'S SIDELIGHTS
By Steve Beverly

THIS IS THE PLAINTIFF...

Where, oh where is Judge Wapner when you need him?

No matter who ultimately was at fault in the quickie divorce between Thomas Edward Gilbert II and the Continental Wrestling Federation, the only emotion which keeps sticking with me is: I'm sick.

I live 50 miles from the CWF headquarters and I think the split is probably the last thing either side wanted. For six brief months, despite a few flaws, we were treated to arguably the most entertaining wrestling program in the USA in 1988. Creative angles, reviving careers of all-but-dead competitors and regenerating interest in a territory on the obit list put much focus on the career of Gilbert.

I won't rehash the charges and countercharges detailed last week. Make no mistake, Eddie is a great booker, creative TV producer and consummate wrestler. Similarly, David Woods is a fine businessman and his family has been successful broadcasters for years. In business one often makes difficult decisions that can be, in the short run, rough on a company. The view on Woods' end is he could not live with what has been called "excesses" with and "outside influences" on Gilbert which the CWF felt were complicating business.

The key in all of this is TV, particularly national fans the CWF has won on its weekly FNN/SCORE cablecast. Non-insiders will find it abrupt when Gilbert is suddenly not there carrying the ball. That, in my view, will test Woods' mettle. FNN plans to keep the show. But the focus and direction of the promotion can't return to the Ron Fuller days if success is to be retained. I have nothing against Fuller but, face it, his show was in the grave when Woods bought it. Second, fresh talent has to continue to be attracted here with enough rotating angles to keep towns from being saddled with the same matches on every card.

The addition this week of Brad Armstrong will be a boost, probably for the CWF and Brad's floundering career. But the group badly needs star-quality heels who can dominate angles and draw heat. Jerry Stubbs and Tony Anthony can't carry it.

The cornerstone, again, has to be TV. In any aspect of broadcasting, once viewers' expectations are raised, you're under the gun to deliver that quality on a regular basis. Even when critics like me accused Gilbert of overangling his shows, at least they told stories and---predominantly---were unpredictable, a necessity in this decade's pro wrestling. That's the challenge Woods faces with whomever he hires as booker (and I've heard two major names mentioned).

As for Gilbert, Paul E. Dangerously & Co., no matter the problems in Continental, I hope they land somewhere successfully. I have a tremendous admiration for their performances. One source tells MATWATCH Gilbert has consulted a production company as a first step toward a semi-opposition promotion. One scenario would have Gilbert promoting Knoxville/Chattanooga and joining forces with a planned Nelson Royal group in the Carolinas. I'm skeptical of that because they'd have to buy their way onto TV, in my opinion, because many station managers in the region say they have all the wrestling they can slot.

But Eddie and Paul are two of this era's fine talents. With Dusty on the wane in the NWA, they'd be excellent candidates for Ted Turner's refurbishing. Both can be catalysts for a major group and they need national exposure to get the act over.

However, I can't help thinking about what might have been in the CWF. Maybe if someone could have mediated the situation sooner...maybe if emotions didn't run so high in this profession. Where, indeed, is Judge Wapner when you need him?

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RATINGS RAP

(Week Ending Aug. 28)

	Rating	Markets
WWF	9.8	258
NWA	6.1	159

(Week Ending Sept. 4)

	Rating	Markets
WWF	8.2	252
NWA	6.1	158

COMINGS & GOINGS

LUGER, BRAD LEAVE NWA; RICKY STEAMBOAT SIGNS WITH TURNER/CROCKETT

---The NWA soap opera continues: Lex Luger has apparently departed in a dispute over TBS's plans to give Sting the eventual title change push with Flair instead of Luger. The word has come from Dallas this weekend. One report earlier in the week had Luger headed for Japan. This, however, disrupts another major series of Luger-Sting vs. Windham-Flair matches on the NWA tour.

---Brad Armstrong is also gone, headed for the CWF next week. Expect Brad to team with new CWF champion Tom Prichard in a series against Anthony & Stubbs.

---Plus, Ricky Steamboat has signed to return to the NWA after a 3 1/2-year absence. Inactive most of the last 18 months, Steamboat's last live appearance was in the first round of the WWF title tourney at WRESTLEMANIA IV. A series with Flair or Windham would be a terrific catalyst.

---CWF did make two good p.r. moves at THE ROAD TO BIRMINGHAM: (1) ringside was cut from $25 to $15 and fans who'd already bought $25 seats were rebated $10; (2) the CWF Birmingham tape last Saturday was reedited with the revised card.

---For an interim period, Bob Armstrong, Ron West and Charlie Platt share CWF booking chores. But the big Dangerously/Gilbert angle will stay in the FNN/SCORE show this weekend.

---Bad news for VCR freaks: Macrovision, the firm which encodes video movies to combat copying, now plans to introduce a technology in January that prevents videotaping of live pay-per-view shows. BOO!

---I wish Dan Wolfe of FNN well with the Verne Gagne PPV Dec. 13 but I don't see one match that makes me want to buy it. Not another Lawler-Kerry rematch, not a Garvin-Gagne TV title match, nor a Sgt. Slaughter-Col. DeBeers grudge battle. One wag suggests the lingerie match of POWW girls is worth photographing---not necessarily for professional purposes.

---I still insist the smartest thing the NWA could do for its Dec. 26 PPV in Norfolk is move STARRCADE to that date. This proposed STARRCADE WEEK at Thanksgiving kills the concept, in my view, because that show needs to be a self-contained, single entity...not an overblown festival like the BASH. The ol' MATWATCHER just may offer a Yule STARRCADE proposal next week.

---Almost unanimous pans of the One Man Gang transformation into Akeem. One TV colleague of mine called it "one of the most racially insulting things I've ever seen the WWF do." I'd saluted Vince for reducing the old TNT-style setups but this one stunk.

---D.I. Bob Carter also left the CWF. He worked the NWA taping in Columbus GA (before that town's worst crowd in years) last Tuesday as a masked jobber.

---At the last TBS taping, Dusty apparently did some Horseman-burial interviews which won't air. But that logo looks awfully stupid on interviews with no replacements.

---Late word has Jerry Jarrett buying 1/3 interest into World Class. More on this next week.

---The card on the Oct. 15 World Class Cotton Bowl show: Kerry vs. Lawler in a Texas Death match with Tennessee rules with Eddie Marlin and Frank Dusek at ringside; a tornado match with Michael Hayes/Steve Cox vs. SST; Kevin Von Erich vs. Brian Adias; Eric Embry vs. Jeff Jarrett for the light hvt. title; Iceman Parsons puts up the Texas belt vs. Kendall Windham (expect it to change); Chigusa Nagayo vs. Candi Divine; Super Black Ninja vs. 4 opponents; Black Bart/J.J. Funk vs. Bill Irwin/Blackjack Mulligan (someone may turn here); and get this: Jimmy Valiant & Macho Midget vs. Killer Brooks & Million Dollar Baby. Bigelow was scheduled against N.E.B. but The Beast will need a new opponent now.

---Bill Watts did settle with Jim Crockett for $1.2-$1.5 million. But I'm told his non-compete clause was canceled in the settlement. A lot of folks wish Turner would look Watts' way before he considers his own new group.

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PINFALL PROFILE: GORDON SOLIE

One of my favorite game show hosts is Bill Cullen, a guy who actually called a little pro wrestling in the late forties. First-rate panelist, smooth personality, quick wit and a man who told you when THE PRICE IS RIGHT before players were told to "Come on down!" My childhood is full of the memory of Bill telling two absolutely stupid contestants (when time ran out on EYE GUESS), "We had three questions left, but you would have missed them anyway."

But in the last 18 months, you haven't seen much of Bill on TV. At the age of 68, he's finally crossed a barrier many younger network executives feel is too old to be effective. And that's rather sad to me.

Gordon Solie may be the Bill Cullen of wrestling commentators. He's still the dean. He still has the John Charles Daly vocabulary. And despite those who argue Gordon has slipped a cog in recent years, he can still outcall the bulk of the modern-day announcers. How I'd long to have a tape of that 1968 Florida show when, in one of Gordon's rare steps over his newscaster-style image, Red Bastein defeated Boris Malenko and Johnny Valentine in a tag match in which Bastein's partner had been injured and Red went one-on-two. Gordon leaped out of his chair, flew in the ring and hugged a stunned Red.

Much has been made of Gordon's departure from several key shows in recent years. His leaving the CWF, PWTW and Global came within a few months of each other---although the PWTW parting was amicable. Joe Pedicino simply had to cut costs on his production and Gordon was too expensive.

But if Vince McMahon made the unpardonable mistake of dumping all the NWA wrestlers the week he took over on the SuperStation in 1984, Jim Crockett didn't make any friends with WTBS viewers when he removed Solie as host of WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP WRESTLING in 1985 without warning. Whereas Gordon may seem out of step with contemporary angles and glitzy production values, Gordon was not out of step with NWA viewers. Solie was the NWA to the national audience and it's more than just coincidental that WCW's ratings (abetted by a snoozer of a squash format) began a nosedive when Gordon was dumped.

If you ask me, if Gordon's pace and enthusiasm appear to have slowed in the last few years, chalk part of it up to being associated with some fairly dull promotions. But his work on Ron Fuller's lively USA shows this year was first-rate and his performance during the Tom Prichard-Tony Anthony-Mystic hanging angle on the CWF in April was outstanding. Plus, his pep on the Florida shows is picking up. FCW is still miles away from being a POWERSLAM show but it is improving.

Unfortunately, age seems to be the enemy of many a classy broadcaster. The older one gets in the field, the more their mistakes seem magnified in the mainstream media. It happened to Chris Schenkel and Curt Gowdy. It's happening now to Joe Garagiola and even Vin Scully. In the game show genre, it's occurring now with Cullen and Gene Rayburn, two of the best who ever gave away cash and prizes. With some of the wrestling media, it's happening to Solie.

Some writers disagree with me but I feel Gordon Solie still has the ability---and most of all, the time-tested reputation that merits a national slot. I've made my voice known to the TBS people that since they own the wrestling operation now, one of the best p.r. moves they could make is to bring Gordon back for one of the NWA shows, possibly Saturday a.m., and reduce the load on the current announcing corps which has to do as many as five shows a week.

Sometimes, the basics are everything in making a concept look new again. I remember that first Saturday morning in April 1985 when Tony Schiavone showed up with Ole Anderson. Tony has gone on to become a very competent personality but it just didn't seem right at the time and it hasn't since, just like it doesn't seem normal not to see the smiling face of Bill Cullen quizzing contestants.

In the classic song, "Mrs. Robinson," Simon & Garfunkel asked, "Where have you gone, Joe DiMaggio?" Game show fans could ask the same question about Cullen today. But if I could adapt the words to fit our own favorite genre, I'd have Paul & Art sing, "Where have you gone Gordon Solie...a nation needs your words and crimson masks...hey, hey, hey...hey, hey, hey."

TV TEMPO (Weekend of Sept. 30-Oct. 2)

RATINGS: PINFALL! - Must See. PILEDRIVER - Excellent. POWERSLAM - Good. DRAW - Average. RESTHOLD - Fair. BOMB - Poor. PLUS - Midscale rating.

(WWC) - Hercules Ayala d. Hurricane Castillo Jr.; Batten Twins d. Chicky Starr/Mr. Pogo. VIDEO: Starr at home; MUSIC VIDEO: Ayala. POWERSLAM.

(MEMPHIS) - Key match: Bill Dundee/Brickhouse Brown/Jeff Jarrett d. Rough & Ready/Ray Odyssey; INTERVIEWS: review of Phil Hickerson-Brickhouse feud; another Stud Stable profile. DRAW.

(CWF) - Lord Humongous/Shane Douglas d. Duke Mason/Bucky Siegler; U.S. JR. TITLE: Danny Davis d. Ken Wayne when Nelson Royal distracts ref to allow Wayne to pull out chain but Davis produces chain of his own and nails Ken for pin; Dutch Mantel d. Pat Rose; Tony Anthony d. Randy Hogan; Tom Prichard wins DQ over Jerry Stubbs when Dangerous Alliance attacks Tom but Austin Idol cleans them out with a steel bar. ANGLES: Samoans told they must win tag belts or leave CWF; Eddie Gilbert announces shoulder injury which may threaten career and Paul E. Dangerously says he wants to shoot him like a lame racehorse and brings out Tony Anthony as newest Alliance member; Stubbs attacks Doug Furnas with a wooden coatrack to prove worthiness of joining Alliance. MISSY'S MANOR: Johnny & Davey Rich. POWERSLAM-PLUS.

(SCW) - Moondog d. Eddie Sweat; SOUTHERN TAG TITLE MATCH: Joey Maggs/Ranger Ross retain in draw with Southern Boys; Ray Candy d. Joel Deaton; John Michaels d. Steve Lawler on reveral when Rhubarb Jones informs ref of Dino Minelli's run-in...Lawler & Minelli attack Rhubarb but Jerry Blackwell saves; Mr. Wrestling II-Dutch Mantel cut off at end of program. ON TAPE: Jerry Lawler reviews feud with Tommy Rich. DRAW-PLUS.

(AWA) - From Nashville: Bad Company d. Ray Odyssey/Shawn Baxter; Manny Fernandez d. Sonny Street; Wahoo McDaniel d. Sid Striker; Michael Hayes/Steve Cox win DQ over Samoan Swat Team; CELEBRITY CORNER: Raul Julia. RESTHOLD-PLUS for finale.

(PWTW) - W. CLASS, Eric Embry d. Vince Apollo; SCW, Tommy Rich on Lawler; WWF, Bro. Love & Rougeaus; WWC, Rufus R. Jones & Jimmy Valiant d. Afa & Sika; Wahoo d. Dan Spivey; MEMPHIS, Bill Dundee/Jeff Jarrett d. Cactus Jack Foley/Gary Young by DQ; AWA, 1986 Col. DeBeers attack on Jimmy Snuka; PORTLAND, Avalanche/Grappler/Al Madril vs. Top Gun/Billy Two Eagles/Scott Peterson still going when show ended. DRAW.

(W. CLASS) - Black Bart d. Vince Apollo; Super Black Ninja d. Tom Jones; The Beast d. Mickey Finn; Terry Gordy wins DQ over Iceman Parsons when The Beast interferes; Cox/Bill Irwin win DQ over SST. ANGLES: Beast/Akbar/Iceman attack Kendall Windham; recap of Lawler decking Kerry. RESTHOLD-PLUS.

(WWF) - SUPERSTARS: Honky Tonk Man d. Bob Emery; Akeem Gang d. Alfred Manley; Other winners: Koko B. Ware, Bubba Bossman, Greg Valentine, British Bulldogs, Brutus Beefcake. ANGLES: Ted DiBiase buys Hercules Hernandez as slave but Hercules chokes Bobby Heenan. DiBiase & Virgil then jump Herc but he recovers and destroys Virgil and chases Ted with chain; Curt Hennig introduced as Mr. Perfect. DRAW. CHALLENGE: Jake Roberts d. Larry Stevens; Hart Foundation d. Gene Ligon/Tony Suber; Other winners: Blue Blazer Hart, Demolition, Don Muraco, Ron Bass. ANGLES: Curt as Mr. Perfect, recap of Akeem skit. BOMB-PLUS.

(NWA/TBS) - A.M.: Midnight Express d. Mike Justice/Rock Allen; Other winners: Italian Stallion, Rick Steiner, Sheepherders, Russian Assassins, Al Perez/Larry Zbyszko. BOMB. P.M.: NWA TV TITLE: Steiner (designated sub) d. Stallion in good match; Fantastics d. The Menace & The Nightmare; Other winners: Ron Simmons, Ivan Koloff, Bam Bam Bigelow (debut), Barry Windham, Steve Williams, Sting, Midnights, Dick Murdoch, Perez/Zbyszko. ANGLES: Nikita saves Uncle Ivan from Assassins' attack; Sheepherders challenge Fantastics during Tommy's & Bobby's interview. RESTHOLD.

(NWA/SYND.) - WORLD WIDE: Varsity Club/Perez/Kevin Sullivan win 8-man tag when Perez puts toe hold on Randy Mulkey; Other winners: Sting, Midnights, Road Warriors, Brad Armstrong/Williams, Sheepherders, Russian Assassins. ANGLE: Nikita, Ivan make save when Assassins destroy their jobbers. STRAIGHT TALK: Steiner does hilarious dunce act with Magnum. RESTHOLD. NWA PRO: Sullivan/Steiner d. Keith Steinborn/Brad Holliday; Other winners: Midnights, Sting, Russian Assasins, Windham, Fantastics, Simmons. ANGLE: RAs attack Uncle Ivan during interview and Nikita makes save. BOMB.

LINES OF THE WEEK - 1. Jerry Lawler, W. CLASS, "I found out the Yellow Rose of Texas was made of ceramics." 2. Joe Pedicino, CWF, to Dangerously: "You've been a pain in my butt for as long as I know." 3. Jesse Ventura, WWF: "You're not as dumb as you look sometimes, McMahon." 4. Randy Savage, REGIS & KATHIE LEE, "I didn't know who was behind the mask of the Conquistadore...maybe George Bush or Michael Dukakis." 5. Tony Schiavone, TBS: "(Kevin) Sullivan is about as indecisive as your wife can be sometimes." 6. Jim Cornette, TBS, on Russian Assassins: "I haven't seen that much Spandex around ugly faces since I went to J.J. Dillon's favorite nightclub." 7. Cornette, "Bush & Quayle---sounds like a companion magazine to Field & Stream. Dukakis & Bentsen...sounds like a brand of power saw." 8. Cornette, on jobber Bret Holliday: "He's so fat, they're throwing M&Ms in the ring for him." 9. Jim Ross, TBS: "I guess they (Sheepherders) didn't have special education classes for nephew Rip."

STRONGEST COMMENTS - 1. Pedicino, CWF, "You (Dangerously) have done a lot of things to disgust me. This time, YOU disgust me!" 2. Sting, WORLD WIDE, to Ross: "I'm glad you don't wear the kind of shoes David Crockett does."

NICKNAME OF THE WEEK - Road Warrior Hawk, for calling Schiavone "Liver Lips."

BLOOPER AWARD - Nelson Royal, CWF, for extolling virtues of "Danny Wayne."

BOO AWARD - AWA, for bypassing Lance Russell as announcer for its Nashville matches.

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